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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SIX-PARTY TALKS AND U.S.-CHINA
RELATIONS

1. Summary: The major Chinese-language Taipei dailies focused their coverage August 2 on cross-Straits issues and a Government Information Office's (GIO) decision to deny seven cable TV channels broadcasting license renewals, effectively suspending their operations beginning August 3. The centrist "China Times" ran a banner headline on its front page that read: "Seven TV channels will go off the air starting tonight." The newspaper also spent its first few pages covering the administration's clarification of the decision, the reactions of the seven TV channels and the call by legislators to pass legislation on the establishment of an independent media watchdog agency (i.e. a National Communication Commission). The pro-unification "United Daily News" and the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" both devoted all of their third pages to the issue, while the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, used half of its page five covering the news. Almost all the major Chinese-language newspapers carried a half-page advertisement by the Eastern TV Company criticizing the GIO's decision to deny its ETTV-S news channel a renewal of its broadcasting license and apologizing to its audience.

The Taipei dailies' reporting on cross-Straits issues centered on the following two aspects: Premier Frank Hsieh's remarks that the outlying island of Penghu may be eligible to handle direct transportation to China; and the arrival Monday in Shanghai of the first shipment of duty-free Taiwan fruit to China. The "United Daily News" printed on its front page a news story with the headline: "Direct transportation between Penghu to mainland [China] is set to be put into practice next month." The other Chinese-language newspapers all carried similar cross-Straits news in their inside pages.

2. Several Taipei newspapers editorialized on the GIO's decision not to renew the broadcasting licenses for seven local TV stations and Taiwan's need to have an independent media watchdog agency. An op-ed piece in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed the strategic implications of North Korea's nuclear program on Taiwan. The article said Taiwan will be put in a more difficult situation once Beijing agrees to continue working with the United States to jointly handle global, regional and bilateral issues. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification "China Post" discussed the first-ever U.S.-China strategic dialogue (currently being held in Beijing). The editorial concluded that for Taiwan, it is better to be a non-flashpoint than to win diplomatic recognition. End summary.

A) "The Strategic Implications of North Korea's Nuclear Program on Taiwan"

Yu Pen-li, assistant professor at the Graduate Institute of American Studies of Tamkang University, noted in an op-ed piece of the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (8/2):

". Washington's grave concern over the situation in Northeastern Asia has resulted in a series of diplomatic mediation, of which the climax was U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's whirlwind visit

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to Beijing in early July. .

"In addition, under the lead of Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, Washington started its first-ever 'U.S.-China Global Dialogue' with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo in Beijing August 1-2. The dialogue, plus Beijing's recent announcement to reevaluate the Renminbi, showed that Beijing has started to pave the way for building a new strategic relationship with the United States.

"Even though it appears on the surface that Beijing wants to strengthen cooperation with Washington, its ultimate strategic objective, however, seems to aim at weakening the United States' position in the Asia-Pacific region gradually by using a 'friendly and cooperative approach.' China even intends to marginalize the United States in an attempt to implement the 'Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine.' Beijing's call in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Washington to withdraw U.S. military from Central Asia as well as its attempt to hold an East Asian Summit in Malaysia in December to propose the establishment of an 'East Asian community' are all examples [to manifest Beijing's ambition].

"In short, any progress made concerning North Korea's nuclear crisis is not totally irrelevant to Taiwan. Taiwan must not be too optimistic when it looks to the future if there is any breakthrough with regard to the Six-Party Talks. [Should an agreement be made,] how is every country involved going to carry out the agreement? Also, what about the establishment of a supervisory mechanism and framework? [Evidently,] there will be plenty of opportunities for Beijing to lay its hand on and exert its influence, and it will help Beijing to implement its strategic layout as planned by the Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine. In other words, once Beijing agrees to continue working with the United States to jointly handle global, regional and bilateral issues, Taiwan will be put in a more difficult situation. Can Taiwan prevent the trend of allowing Washington and Beijing to jointly handle the Taiwan issue in the future? This seems to be a more serious topic than the sell of Taiwan fruit to China."

B) "U.S.-China Strategic Dialogue"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (8/2):

"The first U.S.-China strategic dialogue, a platform initiated by Beijing last year, was inaugurated in Beijing yesterday. . The Beijing meeting is expected to cover Japan, North Korea, bilateral trade, energy and the anti-terrorism fight, after the more difficult Taiwan issue.

"The Vientiane meeting [i.e. ASEAN Regional Forum held in Lao], while pledging to defuse regional conflicts through diplomacy, was widely criticized for excluding Taiwan, which is 'the region's most worrying flashpoint.' Asian security arrangements can't be complete without Taiwan.

"But for the island, it is better to be a non-flashpoint than winning diplomatic recognition."

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